

Education and Workforce Development Cabinet Students recognized at KGHS/KY NEED Youth Summit, Awards Luncheon

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FRANKFORT, Ky. (April 24, 2014) – Students and teachers from across the Commonwealth were recognized April 24 for their participation in project-based learning programs during the seventh annual Kentucky Green & Healthy Schools (KGHS) and Kentucky National Energy Education Development (KY NEED) Youth Summit and Awards Luncheon in Frankfort.

All award recipients completed a rigorous program of research and school improvement in at least one of nine topics in health and environmental sustainability. A total of nine schools received KGHS awards this year for leading efforts to save their schools money, reduce harmful environmental impacts, reduce energy consumption and improve student health. Participants showcased their projects to other student leaders. Additional students and schools were honored for their efforts in the KY NEED Project.

“It inspires me to see the students’ projects and how excited they are about making their school and community environments healthier and more efficient. I hope that participation in these programs helps students find the joy of learning, working together and striving to make the world a better place,” said Kentucky Education and Workforce Development Cabinet Secretary Thomas O. Zawacki, who was the keynote speaker at the summit. KEEC is an agency in the cabinet.

Kentucky Environmental Education Council (KEEC) Executive Director Elizabeth Schmitz said more than 275 schools in more than 75 counties are currently enrolled in the program.

Pikeville High School in Pike County achieved Model Kentucky Green and Healthy School (MKGHS) status, the highest level in the program. It is only the fourth school in the Commonwealth to receive this honor. Model schools serve as mentors to other KGHS schools, and continue their school improvement projects above and beyond the required nine categories.

For the second consecutive year, Hardin County’s West Hardin Middle School was recognized as a MKGHS for revisiting at least one category during the school year and submitting a new project report form for at least one new project.

“It’s wonderful when student discussions in science class spill over into math and reading and

you see the light bulb go off when the students understand how all the individual pieces fit together,” said Leslie Preston Meredith, science and social studies teacher at West Hardin Middle School in Hardin County. “I strive every day to help the students become more aware of how their decisions affect the environment and their future. I hope through my passion I am fostering a love of the environment and its importance in students’ daily lives.”

Farnsley Middle School in Jefferson County completed all nine categories of the program to achieve Kentucky Green and Healthy School status, the ninth school in Kentucky to do so. Four schools, Chance and Portland elementary schools, Jefferson County; Kit Carson Elementary School, Madison County; and Tichenor Middle School, Kenton County, received awards for completing six categories and achieving the School Under Development award status.

Central Elementary School, Knox County, was awarded a School in Progress plaque for completing three projects. SCAPA Bluegrass, Fayette County, was recognized as a Candidate School for completing at least one category.

Sarah Cummins, of Chance Elementary School in Jefferson County, received the KGHS Teacher of the Year Award for her efforts during the 2012-13 school year.

“I am proud of the hard work and dedication that these students and teachers have demonstrated. It takes commitment and follow-through to reach the highest levels of the Kentucky Green and Healthy Schools program. The skills gained make our students leaders today, as well as the leaders of tomorrow,” said Schmitz.

The KGHS program is co-administered by the KEEC and the Kentucky Department of Education.

The theme of the event – healthy schools, healthy environment – is part of Gov. Beshear’s efforts to improve the health of all Kentuckians. The governor launched [kyhealthnow](http://kyhealthnow.com) last month as an aggressive and wide-ranging initiative to significantly reduce incidence and deaths from Kentucky’s dismal health rankings and habits. It builds on Kentucky’s successful implementation of health care reform and uses multiple strategies, like healthy foods and a clean environment, over the next several years to improve the state’s collective health.

For more information about the KGHS program, visit greenschools.ky.gov. To contact the KEEC, visit keec.ky.gov or call toll-free (800) 882-5271.